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DEPT FOR AF A A/S CARTER, AF/SPG, AF/C  
NSC FOR HUDSON  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [SOCI](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: DARFUR'S NOMADS REQUEST DEVELOPMENT AID AND CHANCE TO  
CORRECT MISCONCEPTIONS

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: On February 15, the Nomads Development Council (NDC) led by Abdalla Safi Al-Nur told CDA Fernandez that Darfur's nomads (the majority of which are Arab, although the non-Arab Zaghawa are also nomadic) are misunderstood, marginalized, and in need of humanitarian aid and development. Al-Nur also asserted that the U.S. has a preference for Darfur's Zaghawa tribe and suggested that JEM's Khalil Ibrahim has already deceived the U.S. END  
SUMMARY

¶2. (SBU) Al-Nur opened the meeting thanking the CDA for his personal outreach, stating that the American Charge's presence proves that "you want to know the truth about Darfur." Al-Nur stated that although NDC's focus is on Darfur's Arabs ("as the majority of nomads are Arabs") that other tribes and regions, especially neighboring Kordofan, also concern the council.

¶3. (SBU) Following Al-Nur's opening, six other speakers presented brief remarks focusing on misperceptions of Darfur's Arabs and the need for more development to nomads. Abdalla Takas stated that Darfur's Arabs have been the single population most affected by the Darfur conflict. According to this speaker, the proud nomads have always refused to "beg and take handouts" by joining the IDP camps, and with the departure of their "economic partners" among the now-displaced African tribes their patterns of trading and commerce have been undermined. Nomads used to sometimes attend schools set up for farmers, which no longer exist. Another speaker highlighted the nomad's resiliency, stating "nomads are accustomed to migration, and therefore when conflict starts in an area, they have the ability to flee and live elsewhere."

¶4. (SBU) Yousif Takana, a Baggara (Cattle-herding) Rizeigat from South Darfur, estimated that 25-30% of Darfur's population are nomads. He stated that the Darfur crisis began with competition over scarce natural resources and was exacerbated by changing migration routes that lacked organization and sufficient attention. This has caused clashes not only between nomads and farmers, but also between different nomadic groups as violence between Arab tribes spiked in 2007-2008. According to Takana only "development intervention will help return the equilibrium to Darfur."

¶5. (SBU) Ahmed Suliman Belah noted that both the Sudanese government and the international community have grossly misunderstood and misrepresented the Arab nomads. Another speaker later threatened, "We were not part of the campaign that started this conflict, but if we continue to be isolated, what you accuse us of doing in the past will really happen in the future." Belah stated that, not only the international community, but also the Sudanese Government has neglected Darfur's Arabs as the GoS has failed to recognize that nomads need development aid. Belah concluded his remarks stating that as "the U.S. is the strongest country in the world and the Arabs are the strongest tribe in

Darfur, it is imperative for us to work together."

¶16. (SBU) Haja Ma'lool, the one female in attendance and NDC's Secretary of Foreign Relations, stated that the conflict has affected nomadic women and children more than any other group. She stated that, in particular, these individuals need health services (especially for reproductive health,) education, and development projects, especially wells.

¶17. (SBU) CDA Fernandez replied that although misconceptions about Darfur persist, that there are many individuals in the USG, and in particular in the new Obama Administration, who deeply understand the conflict. He stated that the U.S. does need to eventually move from emergency assistance to development, but that this is made more difficult by the GoS's antagonistic and mistrustful Humanitarian Affairs Commission. The CDA cited USAID's pioneering work with the Southern Rizegat in Ed-Dain as one successful example of USG assistance for Darfur's Arabs. He added that the U.S. is not new to assisting the people of Darfur in times of need, recalling that during the drought of the 1980's the staple food commodity, sorghum, was labeled "Reagan sorghum." The CDA stated that the U.S. does not give preferential support to any single tribe in Darfur, and that support for the one signatory of the DPA should not be interpreted as support for the Zaghawa.

¶18. (SBU) Al-Nur closed the meeting stating that the U.S. indirectly supports rebel movements in Darfur through positive media portrayals of the rebels, feeding their supporters in IDP camps, and bringing humanitarian aid and other services to areas of Darfur controlled by rebels (such as Eastern Jebel Marra). He repeated his colleagues' concern of American bias for the Zaghawa tribe "as they always go to visit Washington and are the only voice you hear."

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Al-Nur said that he is skeptical about the ongoing negotiations in Doha, especially as the negotiations focus solely on one Zaghawa movement. With respect to JEM's Khalil Ibrahim, Al-Nur asserted "you better know what you are doing when dealing with him." Al-Nur ended stating that it is important to recognize that Darfur's nomads have a distinct culture, and that they are "a dignified people, who refuse to beg, and have co-existed with different groups for a long time."

¶19. (SBU) COMMENT: Like other recent interlocutors from Darfur (both Arab and African), Al-Nur alleged the U.S. gives preferential support to the Zaghawa tribe (and their leaders such as Minni Minnawi and JEM's Khalil Ibrahim.) While delivering his advice on Khalil Ibrahim, Al-Nur leaned in, delivered a sly smile, and implied that Khalil Ibrahim has already deceived USG officials. Darfur's Arabs are an important and turbulent component of Darfur's social mosaic. Funneling even a very small portion of U.S. assistance to Darfur's nomads could go a long way in: encouraging Darfur's Arabs to assert their independence from the GoS; mending the social framework within Darfur; and improving the USG's relationship with this aggrieved group. The meeting also aptly illustrated the mentality of Darfur's Arabs, proud, strong and dignified, yet poor, exploited, and marginalized. This sense of pride mixed with perceived marginalization is a dangerous combination, and explains how the GoS was able to exploit some elements of this population throughout the conflict as the regime's most feared shock troops during the worst years of the violence. Safi al-Nur himself played a leading in encouraging abuses and atrocities, under Khartoum's direction, by Arab tribesmen.

FERNANDEZ